

The discovery of iron implements in the megalithic tombs of Suttukanni seems to indicate that the people here must have been acquainted with iron making. It is however difficult to determine the beginning of the use of a particular metal from its presence with a particular set of people at a particular point of time. The beginning of metal for general use as distinguished from articles of ornamentation is said to have come into vogue gradually after the people had become adept in the art of perfecting stone implements, taken to a settled life, learnt the art of weaving garments, begun to use pottery and gradually invented the use of the wheel for making it quicker at the end of the Neolithic age.

According to *Manimekalai* which throws light on many pre-Aryan cultural traditions, the people in those days resorted to the disposal of the dead by cremation, exposure in an open place to be eaten by jackals and vultures, burial, stuffing the corpse in natural pits or burying them in big urns. If so, the people who lived here were not Hindus. The religious belief of the primitive people who constructed the megalithic tombs must have been based on the belief of man's life after death. The natural outcome of the belief was the practice of building tombs meant to safeguard the remains of the dead.

'If we accept the postulate that the literature of a people of a particular period not only portrays contemporary life and events but may also embody in it earlier traditions, and that the advanced state of civilisation which we find in the Sangam period probably had its origin much earlier, we may place the earlier limits of the megalithic and urn cultures which seems to have been a dominant factor of early Tamil civilisation in the pre-Sangam epoch i.e. earlier perhaps than the last three centuries B.C. and earlier, too, than effective 'Aryan' contact with South India.'³⁸

Similarly again if Sangam literature is ascribed to the first three centuries of the Christian era, we may assume that it relates the life and culture of the people as it prevailed during this period as well as one or two centuries prior to this era. 'There is perfect concord between the data relating to the Tamil kings and the life of the Tamils as depicted in the Sangam anthologies on one side and the writing of the classical authors of the early centuries of the Christian era (notably) the compiler of the *Periplus* and *Ptolemy* and the finds of Roman coins of the early Imperial period on the other.'³⁹ Interestingly it has been suggested that during the Sangam period the country surrounding Virampattinam near Pondicherry must have been

ruled by *Velir* kings and that the Sangam poets Veerai Velianar (author of poem 320 in Purananooru) and Veerai Velian Thithanar (author of poem 188 in Agananooru) must have lived in this part of the country.⁴⁰ It may therefore be accepted that what the Sangam literature portrayed was also the culture which existed in this part of the country between the III century B.C. and the III century A.D.

There is also a striking correspondence between the evidence of the Sangam poems on trade and other relations of the Tamil states with the Yavanas (the Greeks and Romans) and that of the classical writers on the same subject particularly Strabo, the anonymous author of the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, Pliny and Ptolemy which show beyond doubt that the period of Sangam literature belonged to the age of classical writers mentioned above. The archaeological findings of Arikamedu near Pondicherry only confirm the evidence of literature.

The gradual percolation of 'Aryan' ideas into the Tamil culture is noticeable in the different strata of Sangam literature. The earliest stratum of Tamil literature shows the influence of the growing religions of the north and the date of this active penetration of Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain religions into the South may well be placed in the last three centuries before Christ. As we approach the close of the period the influence of these ideas gets more and more marked until the two cultures become thoroughly intermingled.⁴¹

The findings of Arikamedu 'apart from corroborating certain of the cultural ramifications portrayed in the Sangam literature, such as the maritime trade that this ancient sea-port town (Ptolemy's Poduke) had with foreign countries, particularly the Mediterranean world, shed some side-light on the script and the language of the people then in vogue in this part of the peninsula'.⁴²

Nilakanta Sastri thinks that the short Brahmi inscriptions found in natural rock caverns in the hills of the south resemble that of the inscriptions from Bhattiprolu and may well be assigned to the second century B.C. The later inscriptions may be taken to be of the third century A.D. like the one at the Ariccalur cave in Coimbatore District. 'The Brahmi graffiti found on the pottery from Arikamedu excavations may be taken also to belong to this class of inscriptions. They are definitely datable to about A.D. 50 and fall chronologically about the middle of the period covered by these records.'⁴³

According to Nilakanta Sastri, 'the script of these inscriptions is Brahmi of the southern variety, the language employed in them is Tamil in its formative stages except in two graffiti from Arikamedu in Prakrit. The writing was alphabetic and already included signs for peculiarly Dravidian sounds,and *n*. Soft consonants are totally absent, and aspirated ones virtually so but for *dha* and *tha*. There are two other notable features in the earlier records, the absence of the doubling of consonants, and the lengthening of *a* before the unvoiced consonant, e.g., *tāndai* for *tandai*. These developments (and others not detailed here) must have resulted from a process of trial and error extending perhaps over several generations.'⁴⁴

Writing about the scripts in and around India, V. Kannaiyan points out that the language of the Tamil Nadu cave inscriptions is Tamil and it satisfies the model found in the *Tolkappiyam*. According to him a comparison of these inscriptions with the script employed by Asoka seemed to show that the script employed by Asoka in the third century B.C. was but a sophisticated variety of the Tamil Nadu cave script. A comparison of the script employed by the potter in Arikamedu near Pondicherry to write down his name on the pots he made with the Tamil Nadu cave script is interesting and revealing. Except for very slight changes, the script remains the same. The script on the mud pots which are dated to about the first century A.D. seems to be only a slightly developed common man's script, showing thus the evolution of the 'Pondicherry-Arikamedu Pot Script' from the 'Tamil Nadu Cave Script' and the Brahmi of the Asokan edicts. Thus according to him the Tamil Nadu Cave Script was borrowed and adopted by Asoka (Brahmi Script) in the third century B.C. and then was used by the common man like the potter in Pondicherry in the first century A.D.⁴⁵

Coming down to the second stage, it could be seen that the Pallava monarchs recognised and encouraged individual learning in accordance with the noble tradition set forth by Kautilya viz. the learned in the Vedas shall be granted brahmadeya lands yielding sufficient produce and exempted from taxes and fines. Such a grant of land to learned Brahmans was known as *bhattavritti* and the endowment was not merely a reward of learning but an honorarium for free imparting of knowledge. An example of a *bhattavritti* is contained in the Kasakkudi plates of Pallava Malla where the extraordinary accomplishments of the donee are narrated reflecting as it were the cultural milieu to which he belonged.⁴⁶ The *Vidyastana* of Bahur already an established institution of Sanskrit learning in the eighth century, stands as a remarkable edifice of Pallava culture.

The Chola period may have been a highly creative epoch. The names of some literary works are preserved casually in some of the Chola inscriptions found in the temples. These works are altogether unknown otherwise. However the names of these works and the occasion for their being mentioned in inscriptions give us some idea of the extent of popular interest in literary productions. One of these inscriptions mentions about *Kulottunga Chola caritai* by Thirunarayana bhata in Tirubhuvanai and the poet was given as reward (sar kâram) land of the extent of half a *nilam* and two *mās* by the *sabha* of the village, the land being always assessable only at the rate prevailing for the twelfth grade. The award was made by the *sabha* in accordance with an order from the king requiring them to adjudge the *kavya* and reward the author suitably.⁴⁷ Again it is said that Kuthan or Ottakoothan came of a class of Sengundar who seem to have pursued the occupations of fighting in the army of privates and captains and of weaving. Born in a family in Malari, an obscure village in the Chola country, he sought service under Sankaran, the chieftain of Puthuvai and father of Sadaiyan, the patron of the more celebrated Kamban. A certain Gângēyan soon discovered that Kuthan was destined for a higher purpose than household service under Sankaran and Kuthan expressed his gratitude by composing the *Nalayirakkovai* on his patron Gangeyan. Another patron of Kuthan was a certain Soman of Puthuvai i.e. Tirubhuvanai near Pondicherry.⁴⁸

Two inscriptions of the period of Kulottunga Chola-I (12th century) in the Padaleeswarar temple at Thirupathiripuliyur refer to a 'Veera Thalavaivan Parasamaya Kolari Mamuni, a poet who is said to be the author of *Astadasapurānam*, *Kannivana purānam* and *poompuliyoor natakam*. The poet is also said to belong to Virampattinam otherwise called Veera near Pondicherry.⁴⁹

An idea of the popularity of dance and music during the Chola days could be formed from the stone carvings on the southern, western and northern facades of Bahur temple which depict different *mudras* of *natya* which must have been popular in those days. The details of costumes, decoration and ornaments bespeak of a highly developed state of *natya sastra* in tenth century Pondicherry.⁵⁰ All these go to show the high level of the cultural attainments of the people of this part of the country during the Pallava and Chola days.

A glimpse of the cultural attainments of the people during the Vijayanagar days could be had from an inscription of Tiruvandarkovil which records that *Tirubuvanamidevi caturvedi mangalam* had an assembly consisting of 4,000 men (217 of 1917). 'A high standard of qualification was expected of its members. They were expected to have studied the four vedas; a few of them were required to have a good knowledge of the Sadangas as well; otherwise they were expected to have acquired a good knowledge relating to the conduct of sacrifices and performed them. They were also expected to have, besides these cultural attainments, a good physique and a strong constitution to bear the fatigue of their work.'⁵¹ Thus from time immemorial this part of the country has remained a cradle of civilisation.

Mandala Purudar, the author of *Soodamani Nigandu*, is said to belong to 'Veerai' in Thondaimandalam. It is likely that this 'Veerai' is the same as Virampattinam. He is believed to have written the *Nigandu* during the Vijayanagar period in the early part of the XVI century (sometime around 1520 A.D.).

Coming down to the modern period, which coincides with the arrival of Europeans on the Coromandel Coast, Pondicherry is thrown open to a new influence. In fact the story of the French presence in Pondicherry is the most exciting phase in its history in which travellers, missionaries, explorers, adventurers, traders and others played their different roles in adding a new facet to its cultural image.

According to historians François Martin de Vitre who sailed from St. Malo on 18 May 1601 along with François Pyrad de Laval aboard the *Croissant*, was the first Frenchman to publish in 1604 a description of his travel to the Orient (**Description du premier voyage fait aux Indes Orientales par les Français en l'an 1603**). He was followed by Augustin de Beaulieu (1616-1622), Jean Baptiste Tavernier (1641-1666), Jean de Thevenot (1666), François Bernier (1670-1671), Abbé Carré (1672-1674) and so many others. Colbert who came under the influence of Tavernier, induced François Charpentier, the Academician to write out a code of instructions to be followed by traders going to the new country and had it published at the king's expense. It was flamboyantly titled as 'A Discourse of a faithful subject of the King touching upon the establishment of a French Company for the East India Trade addressed to all Frenchmen.' Curon (Fieur) and Harpe (de la) gave their fellow countrymen more information about India through their '*Journal des voyages des Grandes Indes*' published in the year 1698.

The image projected by the travellers is said to have had its reflection in XVII century French literature. La Fontaine's acquaintance with François Bernier, philosopher and scholar of the period, extended his intellectual horizon by a study of India and its culture. Many of his fables bear much resemblance to Indian fables and tales particularly the Jatakas, stories from Mahabaratha, Panchatantra, etc. 52

Till the end of the seventeenth century India was known only from the published records of travellers. A systematic and scientific study of Indian civilisation was initiated in France since the beginning of the eighteenth century. As part of their efforts, scholars in Paris planned to collect the treasures of eastern literature, science and philosophy. In 1718, Abbé Bignon, custodian of the manuscripts of the Royal Library, planned to purchase all the chief works of literature from India and Indo-China and asked Etienne Fourmont, a Professor of **Collège Royal**, to draw up a list of such works. Travellers were directed to purchase these precious books including grammars and dictionaries. Some of them were purchased by Roman Catholic missionaries who were stationed at Bengal and South India.⁵³ Thus Fr. Calmette obtained copies of *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda* and *Sama Veda* from South India. Stationed in Chandernagore, Fr. Pons was able to collect the main works of the different branches of classical Sanskrit literature, epics, Puranas, Vyakarana, Nataka, Alankara, Vedanta and Nyaya.⁵⁴ Most of the Indian manuscripts were either in Sanskrit or in Tamil. The same Fr. Pons happens to be the first Sanskrit Grammarian in India for he was the author of a Sanskrit grammar written in Latin based on the *Samksiptasara* and a Latin translation of the Amarakosa. A catalogue of all these manuscripts was published in 1739. The first Sanskrit grammar in a European language was first published in France. Milliet was another French scholar who evolved a comparative grammar of the Dravidian languages earlier than Caldwell.

In the second half of the XVIII century, Joseph Deguignes, Head of the Department of Syrian Language (**Titulaire d'une chaire de Syriaque de 1757 à 1773**) was the first to understand and to proclaim the scope of knowledge of the Asian people beyond the Greco-roman or Christian horizon.⁵⁵ He wanted to enlarge the traditional scope of history by bringing within its ambit the study of the remotest parts of Asia, 'In a subsequent work, thanks to a communication kindly sent to him of a translation of the Tamil '*Bṛgavadam*' Deguignes was able to fix the major synchronism

by which Indian Chronology was linked with the universal one.* He communicated his discovery to the **Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, Paris** in 1772 and his lecture was published in the Memoires of this Academy in 1777 under the title: **Réflexions sur un livre intitulé Bagavadam.**

Anquetil Duperron (1731-1805) was one of the first to put the fundamental texts of Indian philosophy at the disposal of western thinkers. He came to India in 1755 in pursuit of the wisdom of the East. He learnt Persian and tried Sanskrit in vain. But the British occupation of Pondicherry in 1761 shortened his stay in India. He returned to France penniless but with a rich collection of manuscripts, as many as 180 in different languages, including several dictionaries. Anquetil Duperron also secured Zend Avesta, the Parsi's sacred book and had it explained by the Indian Parsis and published it in France in 1771. He also translated fifty Upanishads into Latin.

Le Gentil, a member of the **Académie Royale des Sciences**, came to Pondicherry in March 1768 at the instance of the King of France to make an on-the-spot study of the passage of the Venus across the Sun.⁵⁶ He gave an account of what he learnt and saw in his book '**Voyages dans les mers de l'Inde**' published in Paris in the year 1774. In this book, he gave a substantial account of Indian astronomy and of the religion and customs of the people on the Coromandel Coast.

The traveller and naturalist Sonnerat first drew the attention of the West to the fact that full information on Indian culture was easier to obtain from South India than from any other part of India before the foundation of the Asiatic Society at Calcutta.⁵⁷ Sonnerat was so well disposed towards the people of India that he considered them to be the most ancient and the author of all other civilisations. He affirmed that it was its philosophy and sciences and not its riches which attracted the Europeans to India through the centuries.⁵⁸ The interest in Oriental or Indian studies thus stimulated chiefly by Deguignes and Anquetil Duperron was followed up in an organised manner by **Collège de France** where the study was pursued by A.L. de Chézy and his disciples Eugène Burnouf, Ariel and many others.

* This translation into French was due to Maridas Pillai, a Tamil scholar of Pondicherry.

The flow of men and ideas from France on the other hand slowly gave rise to a new cultural milieu in Pondicherry. With the arrival of the French, a number of inter-racial marriages took place which gave rise to a new type of population known as the 'Topas' who adopted with alacrity the French mode of life. As early as in 1704, in the five companies consisting of 90 men, there were as many as 36 so-called 'Topas'.

The carpenters and blacksmiths who accompanied the early French settlers introduced in Pondicherry the tradition of French workmanship through their children and apprentices. Buildings were constructed according to the 'roman style' with 'terrasses recouvertes d'argamasse. One other craft which left its impact in the town was that of carpentry. Some of the natives also started dressing like the French.⁵⁹ By 1747, almost one-sixth of the local population was converted to Christianity. The church dedicated to St. Lazare known as the malabar church had a great influence over the life of early christians. Quite a number of missionaries acquired a mastery of the Tamil language. As early as in 1703 le Père de la Lane had learnt Tamil in order to carry on his mission of conversion.

It appears that the book entitled '**Grammaire pour apprendre la langue tamoule vulgairement appelée le malabare**' a copy of which is found in the **Bibliothèque Nationale** was written by P.de la Lane in the year 1728 as evident from a reference on the manuscript. The same priest is also reported to have written a Telugu dictionary. Probably it is the work entitled '**Grammaire pour apprendre la langue Télenga dite vulgairement le Badega faite à Pondichéry en l'an 1729**' which is also preserved in the **Bibliothèque Nationale**.⁶⁰ These manuscripts were not published. Just about the time when the French priests were engaged in the collection of manuscripts and grammars for Paris, one among them viz. Father de Bourges, or more exactly de Bourzes, is known to have been engaged in compiling a great lexicographical work like Beschi. He compiled a 'Dictionnaire Tamoul-Français' a copy of which is reportedly preserved in the **Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris**.^{*} This too was never printed but is said to have been largely used later by the lexicographers Mousset and Dupuis. Rev. H. Hosten S.J. in his report submitted to the Indian Historical Records Commission in January 1922, refers to a volume of French-Tamil Dictionary which he thinks must have been composed by the same

* Manuscrits indien 213-214, 2 volumes, 1104 pages.

Father de Bourges.⁶¹ Wilson's Descriptive Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts collected by Col. Mackenzie, also refers to a Tamil-French dictionary. This dictionary which bears the year 1744 is said to be a product of the Jesuit missionary Beschi. The same catalogue also refers to another French-Tamil dictionary the compiler of which is not known.⁶²

A picture of the cultural life of the people in Pondicherry around eighteenth century is available from the Diary of Anandarangapillai. Musical performances to celebrate festive occasions seem to have become almost a regular feature in the town.⁶³ We have it from the mouth of this chronicler that Dupleix' efforts to uphold the prestige of Pondicherry, his determination to take the city of Madras and the unexpected success of his plans were the themes of songs which were composed and sung in the town.⁶⁴ The successful resistance of the British siege of Pondicherry was celebrated with the recital of poems, dance and music.⁶⁵ Musicians from Europe who were in town performed on the occasion of the anniversary of the English defeat and flight. Rangapillai also refers to music performances accompanied by the 'Vina' and other instruments.⁶⁶ Royal dignitaries visiting Pondicherry were often entertained to music and dance.⁶⁷

On another occasion Rangapillai speaks of a musical performance rendered before Governor Dupleix by two musicians named Kasturi Rangaiyan and Venkata Naranappa Aiyar. The performance, first held at the residence of Anandarangapillai, seems to have caused almost a sensation that several of the people had learnt the songs by heart. The Governor himself evinced so much interest and enquired whether the songs which were in Telugu, could be composed in Tamil. The Governor further suggested some changes to be made in the songs so as to extoll the glory of the French in more glowing terms.⁶⁸

Temples were in fact the crucibles of cultural arts like music and dance which were closely linked to the institution of *devadasis*. The fact that Rangi, a dancing girl of Pondicherry, having died without heirs, had left her money to a *natuvanar*, a dance teacher, is indicative of the popularity of dance in those days.⁶⁹ Since those days we are sure that temples continued to patronise music and dance especially during festivals.

There were already symptoms of intellectual intercourse between France and Pondicherry. Books published in France were soon after available in Pondicherry.⁷⁰

Pillai himself was a highly cultured man. He had the highest regard for Kural as seen from the way he held in esteem Madras Sittukkadu Chinnatambi Mudali who could recite by heart all the couplets of Kural and had learnt their truth by experience and could expound them from his own knowledge. The meeting with Chinnatambi Mudali, at once a scholar and a man of exemplary character, is characteristic of the genuine and ardent love which Pillai had for learning.⁷¹ He could himself quote couplets from the Kural with ease.⁷²

'Pillai was a patron of musicians and dancers and what was more, himself possessed some knowledge of music, besides taste for it.'⁷³ On one occasion Dupleix himself pays him the compliment, as a man accomplished in this branch of fine arts.⁷⁴ When it was reported that the temple at Pudupattu village of which he was the renter, did not have music and dance services, Pillai at once ordered that they might be arranged for.⁷⁵

'Among the Sanskrit poets patronised by Pillai, the only writer now known is Srinivasa of Srivasta Gotra who wrote in 1752 the Ananda Ranga Vijaya Champu....⁷⁶ A number of Tamil poets of the time seem to have sought the patronage of Pillai. Sadasiva Desikar, son of Vidyanatha Desikar of Tiruvarur who wrote the Ilakkana Vilakkam, composed the Anandaranga-k-kovai in honour of Pillai.' Anandarangapillai again speaks of a metrical ode in Telugu composed in his honour by Kasturi Rangaiyan, a great scholar of Tiruchchirapalli. This was set to music by Tiruchchirapalli Mangapati Aiyan. The famous Arunachala Kavirayar of Sirkazhi and the author of 'Rama Natakam' was another poet who came to Pondicherry to have his drama premiered in the sabha of Anandarangapillai as he could not perform it in the sabha of Thulasi Maharaja of Thanjavur. Anandarangapillai seems to have offered presents to the poet and told him that it would not be proper for him to witness the performance before it is seen by his friend Thulasi Maharaja and persuaded him to go to the Maharaja first.⁷⁷ Among the other Tamil poets who sought his patronage were Madura Kavi, Namachchivaya-p-pulavar and Javvadu-p-pulavar.⁷⁸

Foremost among those who were instrumental in transmitting knowledge about Indian culture to France was Maridas pillai (1721-1796), an enlightened figure of eighteenth century Pondicherry. He explained to Sonnerat the meaning of the religious beliefs, customs, ceremonies and festivals of the Tamil country. It was he again who taught the rudiments of Tamil astronomy to

Le Gentil, the French astronomer.⁷⁹ It appears that it was from Maridas Pillai that Foucher d'Obsonville* and Monneron** procured the translation of some literary works.⁸⁰ He also translated into French the Bagavadam, the Tamil version of Bhagavata. His correspondence with Deguignes (1772-1777) is said to have led to the discovery of the synchronism of Chandragupta as a contemporary of Alexander the Great. This discovery, later popularised by Sir William Jones, established the link between Indian chronology and the general chronology of the world. Even the establishment of the resemblance of Indian astronomy with that of the old Chaldeans is attributed to him. The discovery of the affinity between Latin and Sanskrit is also attributed to Maridas Pillai of Pondicherry. He died at Pondicherry on 3 April 1796. His tomb now lies within the campus of the church in Muttiyalupettai.⁸¹

The nineteenth century stands out as a period of enlightenment. It was in the course of this century that several printing presses were set up with facilities for printing in Tamil, French, English and Telugu. A large number of books and journals were published heralding the era of mass communication. The interest shown by Frenchmen in Tamil language and culture made many people here get interested in their own language. The Eleventh part of the Soodamani Nigandu was published in 1836 with commentaries by Puduvaï Nainiappa Mudaliar. It carried as a prologue a poem by Puduvaï Ponnusami Mudaliar.⁸² The Urichol Nigandu was published only four years later at the Government Press, Pondicherry in 1840 with a commentary by Chittambalam. This dictionary is said to have been prescribed for use in schools in Pondicherry.⁸³

It is said that Racine's 'Britannicus' rendered into Tamil by Swaminatha Pillai was enacted at Karaikal as early as in 1829 and at Pondicherry in 1837.⁸⁴ 'Estakier Vasahappa', a drama on the life of **Sainte Eustache** was written by Vallet de Virville on the traditional pattern in prose and poetry. This drama, published in the year 1837, was staged at Pondicherry in 1845.⁸⁵

* Foucher d'Obsonville was a traveller, naturalist and writer. A part of his collection of notes was published under the title "*Essais Philosophiques sur les moeurs des divers animaux étrangers*."

** Monneron was a member of **Conseil Supérieur** and then **Commissaire Général des ports et arsenaux** and later **Ordonnateur des Etablissements**.

Although it is true that many educated Tamils came to appreciate the treasures of French literature second-hand through English translations, the role of Indians themselves in popularising the master-pieces of French literature cannot be brushed aside as insignificant. More significant was the contribution of those who came under the direct impact of French language and culture. Writers like Nainiappa Mudaliar and Muthusamy Pillai of Pondicherry considered to be the products of what is called the French age in Tamil culture rose to prominence during this period. Muthusamy Pillai was an erudite scholar and a linguist who showed great interest in historical studies. He helped F.W. Ellis in his efforts at collecting palm leaf manuscripts of Tamil works. His biography of Fr. Beschi is considered to be the best.

The lexicographical enterprises of the French continued even in the nineteenth century. A short Tamil-French and French-Tamil vocabulary was compiled by A. Blin in 1831.* But the most important lexicographical works in Tamil were produced by the missionaries MM. Mousset and Dupuis. The *Dictionarium latino-gallico-tamulicum* (XVIII-1430 pp) was published in the year 1846 and the '**Vocabulaire français-tamoul**' in 1858. The '**Dictionnaire Tamoul-Français**' also attributed to the missionaries Mousset and Dupuis is a monumental work published in the year 1855 to meet the requirements of '**Ouvriers évangéliques**'. The compilation of this dictionary is understood to have been carried out with the help of 'Dictionnaire de Tottler' (Dictionnaire de Jaffna), *Saduragarathi* of Father Beschi and the 'Dictionnaire Tamoul-Latin Litographié' of P. Gury. The dictionary also carried some lessons on grammar to facilitate a better understanding of the language. Besides the Tamil-French Dictionary, Mousset and Dupuis also compiled a shorter French-Tamil Dictionary (**Dictionnaire Français-Tamoul**).**

Father Dupuis also re-edited the *Kodum Tamil* grammar of Beschi with explanatory notes and brought out a summary of *Sen Tamil* grammar in Latin in 1843. The '*Paramarthaguru Kathaigal*' by Viramamunivar (**Fr. Beschi**) was also published in Pondicherry in 1845 with the original script in Latin together with a Tamil translation. Besides editing a number of Tamil books

* Dictionnaire français-tamoul et tamoul-français, Paris 1831, IX-282 pages.

** The third edition of this dictionary appeared in Pondicherry in 1952.

written by Fr. Beschi, he also published a book entitled '**Le Rev. P. Beschi et le Tembavani**' which was printed in 1851 at the Pondicherry Mission Press. In 1863, he published the '**Grammaire Française-Tamoule**' considered to be the most important work of the kind published in a European language. It dealt with the rules of both colloquial and literary Tamil together with prosody. It gave both the morphological technical terms from *Tolkappiyam* and *Nannul* and Latin denominations used at the moment to classify the grammatical forms. So it was possible to learn at the same time the Tamil way of rendering Latin expressions into Tamil and the much more accurate Tamil grammatical analysis. An abridged version of this grammar was brought out in 1892 by P. Lap under the title '**Abrégé de la grammaire française-tamoule.**' His '**தமிழ்-பிரஞ்சு சொல் வரிசை**' was published in 1904 in Pondicherry.

E. Martinet completed his three volume '**Dictionnaire de prononciation Tamoule figurée en français**' in 1877. Besides dealing with the principles of Tamil grammar, the dictionary attempted to distinguish pure Tamil expressions from the colloquial. The Tamil pronunciation was given in French phonetics. A singular feature of this dictionary was that it contained an appendix of words which had no French equivalents.

Apart from those who worked for years on the grammars and dictionaries, quite a few were attracted to the Tamil language and its literature. Independently of the efforts of Burnouf and Ariel many Frenchmen were actively engaged in Tamil studies all through the XIX century. P. Perreaux published in 1868 the **Méthode indienne pour apprendre à lire en peu de temps le Tamoul et le Français**, a book meant to teach French and Tamil with speed and ease. Already in 1830 he had published a book on arithmetic for natives under the title '**Traité élémentaire d'arithmétique**'. Other missionaries brought out several French-Tamil as well as Tamil-French manuals. M.J. Baulex who served in the Vellore region published **Vingt ans dans l'Inde**. He is also noted for the translation of *Panchatantra* from Tamil in 1878. The book **La méthode de tamoul vulgaire** published in the year 1915 dealt with the pronunciation of Tamil colloquial words. Lamaisse collected a number of poems of South India and published their translation under the title of '**Poésies populaires du Sud de l'Inde** (1867) and '**Chants populaires du Sud de l'Inde** (1868). He then carried out the translation of '**Tiruvarangakkalambakam**' (திருவரங்கக்கலம்பகம்) '**Devadasi pattu**' (தேவதாசிப்பாட்டு) and '**Teru pattu**' (தேருப்பாட்டு).⁸⁶

B. Adam was Justice of Peace in Karaikal between 1878 and 1884. Attracted by the beauty of the language, he pushed through his studies and acquired a mastery of the Tamil language. He translated into French the biography of Tiruvalluvar. His translation of *Atti Choodi*, *Kondrai Ventan*, *Vetri Verkai*, *Moodurai*, *Nalvazhi*, *Nanneri*, *Needi Neri Vilakam* all of which were received well both in France and in Pondicherry.⁸⁷

Julien Vinson, born of French parents in Karaikal, evinced keen interest in Tamil literature and improved considerably his knowledge by establishing contacts with U. V. Saminada Iyer, Nagai Vedesalampillai (Maraimalai Adigal), Pandit Savarirayar, Karaikal, Ayakannu and Ayasamy Pulavar, all undisputed Tamil scholars. He taught Hindustani and Tamil at l'Ecole Nationale de Langues Orientales from 1879 to 1921. *Le verbe dans es langues dravidiennes* (1878), *Légendes Bouddhistes et Djainas'* (1900), a French translation of some parts of *Chintamani*, *Cilappatikaram*, *Manimekalai*, 'Manuel de la Langue Tamoule' (1903) are some of his other notable publications. He also wrote some short stories in Tamil and evinced keen interest in rendering the *Kamba Ramayana* into French. His translation of *Tadagai Vadhai Padalam* and *Agaligai Pava Vimochana Padalam* appeared in Pondicherry in 1861. It was he who copied out the text of *Villai Puranam* from out of the collection of Tamil manuscripts in Paris and sent it to U.V. Saminada Iyer who brought to light the fact that it was the *Stalapurana* of Villiyannur.

Julien Vinson mentions that it had become almost a fashion among French officials returning to France after a short stint in French—India to dabble in writing about Hindu religion and Indian literature. According to him they were very often second-hand versions of already disproved notions. Their writings were sometimes instrumental in creating an erroneous image in the minds of the French people. In this connection, Vinson refers to the publication entitled *Critique et analyse du Ramayana de Valmiki et de Bhagavatgita* (1880) by E. Lamaisse, a former Chief Engineer of the French establishments in India. ⁸⁸

Two of Vinson's students, Barrique de Fontainieu and G. Devéze helped to introduce some more Tamil works to the French world. Fontainieu translated the *Inbathuppal* of *Thirukkural* into French. It will be of some interest to note that the institution known as 'Enfant de langue' was organised by the **ordonnance** of 29 October 1827 in order to encourage those aspiring to become public servants to learn the local language. The institution was open to

European candidates between 16 and 22 years of age. The candidates who passed out were required to serve for at least five years in French-India.⁸⁹ They were taught Tamil and Hindustani and optionally Telugu. This Institution functioned in Pondicherry between 1827 and 1838.⁹⁰

The cultural history of XIX century Pondicherry will not be complete without drawing attention to Savarayalu Nayagar, the Poet Laureat of Pondicherry. Born on 9 December 1829, quite early in life he was attracted to the study of Tamil, which he came to learn under Mahavidwan Meenatchi-sundarampillai of Tiruchchirapalli. He rose so much in the estimation of his guru that his master sang the praise of his student in '*Savarayalu Nayagar Malai*'. Mahavidwan Thiagarasa Chettiar of Kumbakonam sang the '*Irattai Mani Malai*' in his honour. An ardent Christian, he wrote the *Perinba Sadagham*, *Perinba Andhadhi* and *Tirunavatchadagham*, all in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. His discourses on *Thembavani* won him the appellation of *Thembavani Ubadésigar*. A recipient of several other awards and titles, his fame spread even to far-away France. He championed the cause of women's education and was instrumental in establishing in 1865 a girls' school in Pondicherry. His advocacy of prohibition even in those days stands as evidence of his reformatory zeal. He died on 30 January 1911 at the age of 82.⁹¹

The influence of French education and culture becomes more evident in the XX century. Under its impact many a French literary works were adapted or translated into Tamil. Victor Hugo, through his '*Les Misérables*' attracted the greatest attention. Vidwan Duraiswamy Iyengar, the great Tamil novelist adapted this work in his novel entitled '*Kanakambujam*' published in 1923. Yogi Sudhananda Bharathi rendered '*Les Misérables*' as '*Ēzhai Padum Padu*' which was later filmed. The Kannadigas translated this work into Canarese under the caption '*Nonthavalvu*' while the Malayalees have adapted this work in their language under the title '*Pavangal*'. The same way, Molière's well known drama '*L'Avare*' was translated into Malayalam as *Lupthan* and *Lubhagresaradu* in Telugu⁹². The '*Three Musketeers*' of Dumas seems to have inspired 'Kalki' into writing his '*Ponniyin Selvan*', Roger Martin du Gard's work *Vicille France* inspired Ka.Na. Subramanian to write his *Thapalkaran*. André Gide's '*La Porte Etroite*' was rendered into Tamil by the same writer under the title *Kurugiyapathai*. Sudhananda Bharathi rendered Victor Hugo's '*l'Homme qui rit*' as *Illichavayan*. Anatole France's '*Thais*' was translated by the same writer under the caption *Thasiyum Thabasiyum*. A.M. Ali rendered '*Le Comte de Monte*

Cristo of Alexandre Dumas into Tamil. Sri Aurobindo's **'Rodogune'** was an English adaptation of dramas bearing the same title first written by Corneille and later by Gibert.

'Horace' another important work of Corneille was rendered into Tamil as *Thyagamey Perithu* by M.M. Houssain and was later staged in Pondicherry. Similarly, **'Hernani'** of Victor Hugo was rendered into Tamil by Dr. Sinouvasan under the title *Simmavarman*. **'Le Cid'**, a tragedy by Corneille was a source of inspiration to many. It was translated and played by André Marie under the title *Vetri Veeran*, while Dr. Sinouvasan rendered it under the title **'Satya Dévi'**. **'Vincelas'** of Rotrou was translated into Tamil as **'Needhivarman'** by R. Desigampillai. Later he translated a work by Bernardin de Saint Pierre under the title of *Indiyak Kudisai*. Among Desigampillai's other contributions, we may mention his French translations of *Andāl Tiruppāvai*, *Saraswathi Andhādhi Sakalakalavālli Malai*, *Thiruvilayadarpuranam*, *Kanchipuram* and *Kandappuranam*.

Several works of Emile Zola, Romain Rolland, Gustave Flaubert, Maupassant, Alphonse Daudet, Balzac etc. were made known to the Tamil world through Tamil translations. Quite apart from all these, **'Les Maximes'** of La Rochefoucauld were rendered into Tamil by Álavandar. The French Romantic poetry attracted the attention of Tamil scholars conversant with French. Mudukannan rendered several of such pieces into Tamil verse. Alfred de Vigny's **'La mort du loup'** rendered by him under the title **'ஓநாயின் சாவு'** appeared in Kalaikadir. Victor Hugo's **'La mort du chien'** and **'Oceano Nox'** appeared as **'நாயின் சாவு'** and **'ஓசியோக் துன்பம்'** in Thamizh Selvi (January 1951). There is no doubt that all these works helped to spread the knowledge of French language and literature among the Tamil population.

This century also stands out as the period that gave birth to several associations devoted to the promotion of fine arts in the Territory. Mention may be made of **Société Philharmonique de Pondichéry** (1920), Vasoudevagana Sabai (1912), Krishna Gana Sabha (1909), Sri Samarasagnana Sangeetha Sabai (1929), Selva Vani Gana Sabha (1940) and Mangala Gana Sabha (1943). The institutions were very often the progenies of one or more connoisseurs of art. Only some of these cultural associations had a long lease of life. Most of them flourished for a few years only to go defunct after sometime either due to lack of resources or decline in the enthusiasm of their progenitors. The Thyaga Brahma Sabha started in 1946 was in receipt of financial assistance from the administration for several years to celebrate the Thyaga Brahma Aradhana in honour

of Saint Thyagaraja. The opening of the Radio Station in 1966 and the organisation of the Sangeetha Nataka Sangam the following year somewhat brightened the cultural atmosphere of the Territory.

The cultural fresco of XX century Pondicherry will not be complete without mention of some of the leading luminaries who added lustre to the cultural life of Pondicherry.

Although born at Ettayapuram in Tirunelvely District, Subramania Bharathi was one of the first to seek refuge in Pondicherry in 1908 to escape from British incarceration. He lived here under the patronage of Kuvilai Kannan, S. Swaminatha Dikshidar and Sundaresayyar who were readers of 'India', a journal with which Subramania Bharathi was closely connected while in Madras. Within a month the 'India' press was clandestinely brought to Pondicherry from Madras and the journal which had stopped appearing from the last week of September 1908 reappeared from October 20. He soon settled in a south facing house at Iswaran Dharmarajakoil street. Sri Aurobindo arrived at Pondicherry in April 1910 and since then Bharathi came more and more under the influence of Sri Aurobindo. A few months later came V.V.S Iyer. Among his disciples may be mentioned Va. Ra. Aravamudayangar popularly known as 'Amudha' and Kanakasubburathinam who later became famous as Bharadidasan.

In 1911, Sub-Collector Ashe was shot dead by Vanchi Iyer at Maniyachchi junction. Following this incident the British intelligence maintained greater vigilance over political refugees in Pondicherry. During this period Sundaresayyar, Ponnu Murugesapillai and Sankara Chettiar offered help and protection to Bharathi. Kanakalingam, a Harijan, and Arumugha Chettiar were two of his other patrons.

He wrote the '*Desa Muthumari pattu*' in honour of Uppalam Muthumariamman temple—a temple patronised by Harijans. So abhorred was he by castism and caste distinctions that on one occasion he donned Kanakalingam with the sacred thread after due religious ceremony and admitted him into the upper caste in deference to the belief that anyone could become a member of the upper caste by wearing the sacred thread.

His '*Vedarishigal Kavithai*' and '*Patanjali yoga soothiram*' and '*Katchi*' were attempts at *vers libres*, a poetry form which probably Bharathi learnt through his acquaintance with French literature. His frequent early morning visits to Thiagarajapillai *madu* provided him the inspiration to write the '*Thiruppalli ezhuchi*' and '*Kalai pozhuthu*'. He also published the '*Bharathi Arupatharu*'. The Muttiyalupettai mango grove that belonged to Krishnasamy Chettiar provided him the scenario for his '*Kuyil pattu*'. The cyclone of 22 November 1916 prompted him to write the '*Thikkukal ettum cithari*' and the '*Katradikuthu kadal kumuruthu*'.

The first part of *Panchali Sabatham* appeared in 1912. His '*Puthia Athichoodi*' appeared in 1914 and '*Pappa padal*' appeared in the February 1915 issue of 'Gnana Bhanu'. In November 1916 appeared the third volume of his poems.

On 20 November 1918 while he was on his way to Villiyannur he fell into the hands of the British who were all along maintaining a close watch over him. He was detained at Cuddalore Sub-Jail where he remained till 14 December (for 24 days). After his release he went to Kadayam near Tenkasi. All his subsequent attempts to have his work published did not meet with adequate public response. In 1920 he returned to Madras to work in 'Swadesamitran'. Once on a visit to the Thiruvellikeni temple, he was attacked by the temple elephant, as a result of which he died on 12 September 1921 when he was only thirtynine. It is significant that although his stay in Pondicherry lasted only a little more than 10 years, this period turned out to be the most creative in his life-time thus linking inseparably his name and poetic accomplishments with Pondicherry.

V. V. S. Iyer is another scholar patriot whose life and career is so closely linked with Pondicherry. Born on 2 April 1881, in a village near Karur, he joined the Bar at twenty. But destiny took him to London where he was drawn to the freedom movement. He escaped from London to evade arrest, wandered through Italy, Greece, Turkey and Egypt only to find shelter in Pondicherry where he arrived in November 1910 when he was only 29 years old. Iyer soon mastered French to study Napoleon's War Memoirs in the original and wrote a synthetic treatise on military strategy, adapting Napoleon's method of warfare for a war against the British rulers. He wrote the biographies of Napoleon, Garibaldi, Mazzini, Rana Pratap Singh, Chandra Gupta, etc. and wrote some short stories as well. He published his works through

'Kamban Nilayam' which he organised in Pondicherry. He began the translation of the Tamil classic 'Kural' on 1 November 1914 and completed it in five months. In 1920 he left Pondicherry for Madras where he edited *Desabakthan*, a Tamil daily for nine months, then spent another nine months in jail on charges of sedition. It was in those nine months that he brought out 'A study of Kamba Ramayana'. He spent his last days at the Tamil Gurukulam he organised at Sermadevi before he was drowned on 3 June 1925 in an attempt to save his ill-fated daughter Subhadra who tripped into the deep currents of the Kalyana Thirtha falls at Papanasam only five years after he left Pondicherry.

Sankardas Swamigal, the doyen of the Tamil stage and author of several dramas and poems, came to Pondicherry to perform a series of dramas only to breathe his last here on 13 November 1922. His advent into Pondicherry was in a way responsible for generating a great deal of interest in drama which came to be organised under the auspices of several *nataka sabhas*.

The 'Swami Vivekananda Nataka Sabha' organised by Dr. Sinouvasan and the 'Vani Vilas Sabha' started at the initiative of Dr. Sundaresan were two of the associations which popularised the drama in those days.

Kanakasuppurathinam (born on 29 April 1891) even as a child evinced a liking for Tamil literature which was so ably nurtured by Bangaru Pathar, his school teacher and subsequently reinforced by Saram Periasamipillai, a renowned Tamil scholar. He began his career as a teacher even before he was eighteen in a primary school at Niravi. His contacts with Bharathi and other freedom fighters attracted him to the cause of Indian nationalism. The '*Kadar Rattinappattu*' was the result of his nationalist zeal. Enveloped as he was by the reformist zeal of Bharathi he also defended the cause of women's freedom, attacked child marriages and advocated widow re-marriage. In due course he came to call himself 'Bharathidasan'.

Inspired as he was by the age old treasures of Tamil poetry, he wrote the '*Subramania Thudiamudhu*', a devotional poem in honour of the deity of Mailam in 1926. He was soon attracted to the self-respect movement of E.V. Ramassamy Naicker and took cudgels against religion and rituals. He carried on his campaign through his writings in '*Puthuvai Murasu*' which started appearing from November 1931. In 1935 he was associated with '*Subramania Bharathiarin Kavithamandalam*' a journal of poems blazing a new

trail in Tamil literary journalism. In 1938 appeared his first collection of poems. In July 1948, he launched a journal of poems under the name '*Kuyil*' which appeared for about a year. In July 1955, he was elected to the Pondicherry Assembly. Since June 1958 he brought out his journal '*Kuyil*' once again which appeared for about three years.

He also made a mark as a lyrical poet through his '*Azhagin Chirrippu*' (The Laughter of Beauty) and '*Kathal Ninaivugal*' (Memories of Love). His '*Issayamudhu*' formed another collection of lyrical poems. He painted the picture of an ideal family in his '*Kudumba vilakku*' (The Light of the Family). His '*Ethirparatha Mutham*' and '*Pandian Parisu*' are examples of short epic poems. He also wrote some poems for children and tried his hand at prose plays before he breathed his last on 21 April 1964. Among his plays '*Pisirandayar*' won him posthumously the Sahitya Academy Award in 1961. In recognition of the revolutionary zeal that was evident in some of the poems he was called '*Puratchikavi*' or the revolutionary poet. His admirers call him '*Pavendhar*' i.e. 'King of poems'.

Following the tradition set by Bharathi, he wrote in a simple elegant style and sought to liberate, as it were, Tamil poetry from the clutches of pedantry and infused new life and verve into it. Bharathidasan's poems inspired a new generation of young poets not only in Pondicherry but in the whole of Tamil Nadu. Among them mention may be made of Vanidhasan of Seliyamedu, a self-acknowledged disciple of Bharathidasan.

This may also be marked as a period of Tamil revivalism when a great deal of literary activity was in evidence. As early as in 1910, Subramania Bharathi edited '*Sūryodayam*' (L'Aurore), a Tamil journal published by Saigon Chinnayya Rathinasamy Naidu. Bangaru Pathar edited the '*Kalaimagal*' since 1913. '*Karpagam*', another literary journal, started appearing from 1915. The '*Thamizh Magavu*' edited by V. Doraisamy Mudaliar appeared from 1918. All these journals helped in one way or other to stimulate a great deal of creative endeavour. '*Thamizhanangu*' (1940) and '*Thamizh Selvi*' (1960) also joined in later. Journals such as '*Thāinadu*', '*Desabhakthan*', '*Desa Sēvakan*', '*Karpagam*', '*Kudiarasu*', '*Lōkobakāri*', '*Industhān*', '*Anumān*', '*Nagara duthan*' and '*Grāma uzhiyan*', all of which appeared at some time or other from Pondicherry carried Bharathidasan's poems.

There were others who added lustre to the intellectual life of Pondicherry during this century, and in the process have left behind indelible traces of their endeavours.

Gnanou Diagou known for his versatility and munificence was essentially a man of letters. An advocate by profession, he published the '**Principes de Droit Hindou**' (1920) and '**Le Droit Civil**' both of which served as authoritative reference works for those in the legal field. He translated into French the *Sundorakandam* of Kamban's *Rāmavana*, *Thirukural*, *Naladiar*, *Asarakkovai* *Nānmani Kadigai*, *Thirikadugam* and the *Aranerisāram*. As one of the founder members of the Historical Society, he edited and published in eight volumes the summary of all the judgments of Pondicherry's highest court of law covering the period from 1735 to 1820 under the title '**Arrêts du Conseil Supérieur de Pondichéry**'. '**Le Général de Lally**' was his biographical work, based on the diary of Anandarangapillai. As a politician he was for many years a member of the **Conseil Général**.

Paramananda Mariadassou (1870-1948) will be remembered for his studies of the traditional system of medicine in India and the large number of books through which he sought to open the window of traditional Tamil medicine towards the French world. His '**Mœurs Médicales de l'Inde**' (1906), '**Le Jardin des simples de l'Inde**' (1913), '**Médecine traditionnelle de l'Inde**' (Lectures) (1934), '**Matière Médicale Ayurvedique**', '**Le rajeunissement par le Kayakarpam**' (1938), '**Médecine traditionnelle de l'Inde (us et coutumes de l'Inde)**' (1940) reveal the range of his studies. His researches in the French School of Medicine where he was a lecturer on traditional Tamil Medicine stimulated a great deal of interest among the French medicos.

Léon Saint Jean of Karaikal (23 August 1900—December 1965) popularly known as Karavelan was at once an ardent patriot and an intellectual. Although a lawyer by profession he strove so much to spread the knowledge of Tamil among the French. He translated into French the *Tiruvallangatu Mūta Tirupatikam* by Karaikalammayar, *Atisudi* by Avvayar and *Pudīa Atisudi* by Bharathiar. As if in recognition he was asked to declare open the Tamil Unit of the French Institute in 1956.

Many are the French scholars who have left behind the impress of their deep study and erudition, that it will not be possible to mention all of them and present a full scale account of their contributions to the many branches of studies. What is attempted here is only a brief round-up. Astronomy drew the attention of Le Gentil and Bailly. The attention of Foucher d'Obsonville, the naturalist, came to be fixed on the birds and animals of Tamil Nadu. Archaeological studies received the attention of Jouveau Dubreuil, A Foucher, J.M. & G. Casal etc. The study of History and Indology received

the attention of so many scholars. Anthropology drew the attention of G. Olivier, Abbé Dubois and Lambozat. The names of Léon Sorg, Falgayrac J. Sanner, E. Gibelin, F.N. Laude, etc. are closely associated with legal studies. The problems of public health attracted the attention of Huillet. The flora received the attention of Achart and Bigot. Dessaint published a manual of medicine. Dr. Lucien Giboin brought out a publication on the medicinal plants. (*Epitôme de Botanique et de Matière Médicale de l'Inde*). Geology attracted the attention of Lemoine and Faron, Geography that of Mouzon and Jacques Dupuis. Louis Dumont conducted a full scale enquiry on the social and religious organisation of Pramalai Kallar in Madurai District. Bougle, Esquer and Julien Vinson studied the caste system.

Charles Valentino wrote about the economy of French India at the beginning of this century (*Notes sur l'Inde: serpents, hygiène médecine, aperçus économiques sur l'Inde française*). Emmanuel Adicéam studied the system of irrigation in Tamil Nadu. Legris and Blasco devoted their attention to climatology.

To sum up, suffice it to say that French rule was from the beginning very generous except for a few instances of excessive religious zeal. Their influence was at once liberal and deep. While they respected the manners and customs of the local people, they endeavoured to impart the benefit of their knowledge to their subjects. This was more marked in the realm of religion and education. French influence is also evident in the realms of language, dress, food, music, architecture, the arts and crafts and even in matters of certain customs and conventions. Pondicherry, in spite of all its inherent Indianness, does not resemble any other town in India. Here one can find order, clarity and symmetry qualities which are typically French. Although with merger in 1954, the political domination of France over Pondicherry ended, the cultural links forged by a three-hundred-year long history still remain strong. Although culturally the vast majority of the people in Pondicherry are bound by Indian cultural traditions, a good number of them, especially those who still maintain some kind of a link with France and the French speaking world, are open to French cultural influence.